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Passive smoking 'not cancer risk'

Chris Mihill
Medical Correspondent

PASSIVE smoking is not a lung cancer risk, according to a report commissioned by three tobacco companies and published yesterday.

Its authors, six European scientists, calling themselves the European Working Group on Environmental Tobacco Smoke and Lung Cancer, insisted yesterday they were independent of the tobacco companies and would have published their findings regardless of the outcome. The study was funded by Philip Morris Europe, British-American Tobacco and Rothmans International.

"Our findings are entirely consistent with there being no elevated risks of lung cancer by exposure to environmental tobacco smoke at work or in the home, either from a smoking parent or spouse," the report says. The scientists looked at 48 studies of environmental smoke and lung cancer.

Jeffrey Idle, professor of medicine at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, and chairman of the working party, said: "Having considered the evidence, it is the judgment of the working group that environmental tobacco smoke is not a primary lung carcinogen."

However, John Moore-Gillon, chairman of the British Lung Foundation, said: "The findings of this analysis, which was paid for by the tobacco industry, is in direct contrast to the views of every world-respected expert in the field. When the World Health Organisation says one thing ... and the tobacco industry says another, I know which I find easier to believe."

It has been estimated that passive smoking kills 200 people a year in the UK.

Some studies have said the non-smoking wives of men who smoke are at increased risk of lung cancer. One study found nicotine-like chemicals in the blood of non-smoking children whose parents smoked, with the levels in some cases equalling those found in occasional smokers.

A spokeswoman for the anti-smoking pressure group Ash (Action on Smoking and Health) said the report ignored other illnesses linked to smoking, such as bronchitis and emphysema. It aimed to delay legislation to control smoking in public places, and to confuse the public.

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